

timely objection by the party, the Presiding Officer will determine the extent to which the interrogatories will be permitted.

(d) *Admission of facts.* After the issuance of a Notice of Docketing and Hearing, a party may serve upon the other party a request for the admission of specified facts. Within 30 days after service, the party served shall answer each requested fact or file objections thereto. Upon timely objection by the party, the Presiding Officer will determine the extent to which the request for admission will be permitted. The factual propositions set out in the request shall be deemed admitted upon the failure of a party to respond to the request for admission.

(e) *Production and inspection of documents.* Upon motion of a party showing good cause therefor, and upon notice, the Presiding Officer may order the other party to produce and permit the inspection and copying or photographing of any designated documents or objects, not privileged, specifically identified, and their relevance and materiality to the cause or causes in issue explained, which are reasonably calculated to lead to the discovery or admissible evidence. If the parties cannot themselves agree thereon, the Presiding Officer shall specify just terms and conditions in making the inspection and taking the copies and photographs.

(f) *Limitations.* A discovery procedure may not be used to reach documents, transcripts, records, or other material which a person is not entitled to review pursuant to § 958.11.

§ 958.13 Sanctions.

(a) *In general.* The Presiding Officer may sanction a person, including any party, attorney or representative, for:

- (1) Failing to comply with a lawful order or prescribed procedure;
- (2) Failing to prosecute or defend an action; or
- (3) Engaging in other misconduct that interferes with the speedy, orderly, or fair conduct of the hearing.

(b) *Reasonableness.* Any such sanction, including but not limited to those listed in paragraphs (c), (d), and (e) of this section, shall reasonably relate to

the severity and nature of the failure or misconduct.

(c) *Failure to comply with an order.* When a party fails to comply with an order, including an order for taking a deposition, the production of evidence within the party's control, or a request for admission, the Presiding Officer may:

- (1) Draw an inference in favor of the requesting party with regard to the information sought;
- (2) Prohibit such party from introducing evidence concerning, or otherwise relying upon, testimony relating to the information sought;
- (3) Permit the requesting party to introduce secondary evidence concerning the information sought; and
- (4) Strike any part of the pleadings or other submissions of the party failing to comply with such request.

(d) *Failure to prosecute or defend.* If a party fails to prosecute or defend an action under this part, the Presiding Officer may dismiss the action, or enter an order of default and an Initial Decision.

(e) *Failure to file timely.* The Presiding Officer may refuse to consider any motion or other pleading, report, or response which is not filed in a timely fashion.

§ 958.14 Ex parte communications.

Communications between a Presiding Officer and a party shall not be made on any matter in issue unless on notice and opportunity for all parties to participate. This prohibition does not apply to procedural matters. A memorandum of any communication between the Presiding Officer and a party shall be transmitted by the Presiding Officer to all parties.

§ 958.15 Post-hearing briefs.

Post-hearing briefs and reply briefs may be submitted upon such terms as established by the Presiding Officer at the conclusion of the hearing.

§ 958.16 Transcript of proceedings.

Testimony and argument at oral hearings shall be reported verbatim, unless the Presiding Officer orders otherwise. Transcripts or copies of the proceedings may be obtained by the parties at such rates as may be fixed by

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contract between the reporter and the Postal Service.

§ 958.17 Initial decision.

(a) After the conclusion of the hearing, and the receipt of briefs, if any, from the parties, the Presiding Officer shall issue a written Initial Decision, including his or her findings and determinations. Such decision shall include the findings of fact and conclusions of law which the Presiding Officer relies upon in determining whether the respondent is liable for civil penalties, clean-up costs and/or damages for mailing hazardous materials and/or related violations under 39 U.S.C. 3018, and, if liability is found, shall set forth the amount of any civil penalties, clean-up costs and/or damages imposed.

(b) The Presiding Officer shall promptly send to each party a copy of his or her Initial Decision. A party may, in accordance with § 958.18, appeal an adverse Initial Decision to the Judicial Officer. Unless a party timely appeals in accordance with § 958.18, the Presiding Officer's Initial Decision, including the findings and determinations, becomes the final agency decision.

§ 958.18 Appeal of initial decision to Judicial Officer.

(a) *Notice of appeal and supporting brief.* A party may appeal an adverse Initial Decision by filing, within 30 days after the Presiding Officer issues the Initial Decision, a Notice of Appeal with the Recorder. The Judicial Officer may extend the filing period but only if the party files a request for an extension within the initial 30-day period and demonstrates good cause for such extension.

(1) The Notice of Appeal must be accompanied by a written brief specifying the party's exceptions, and any reasons for such exceptions, to the Presiding Officer's Initial Decision.

(2) Within 30 days of receiving the party's brief, the opposing party may file with the Judicial Officer a response to the specified exceptions to the Presiding Officer's Initial Decision.

(b) *Form of review.* Review by the Judicial Officer will be based entirely on the record and written submissions.

(1) The Judicial Officer may affirm, reduce, reverse, or remand any determination about a penalty or assessment by the Presiding Officer.

(2) The Judicial Officer shall not consider any argument or objection that was not raised in the hearing unless the interested party demonstrates that the failure to raise the argument or objection before the Presiding Officer was caused by extraordinary circumstances.

(3) If any party demonstrates to the satisfaction of the Judicial Officer that additional evidence not presented at the hearing is material and that there were reasonable grounds for the failure to present such evidence, the Judicial Officer may remand the matter to the Presiding Officer for consideration of such additional evidence.

(c) *Decision of Judicial Officer.* The Judicial Officer shall promptly serve each party to the appeal with a copy of his or her decision. The decision of the Judicial Officer constitutes final agency action and becomes final and binding on the parties.

§ 958.19 Form and filing of documents.

(a) Every pleading filed in a proceeding under this part must contain a caption setting forth the title of the action, the docket number (after assignment by the Recorder), an accurate designation of the document, and the name, address, and telephone number of the party on whose behalf the paper was filed. It shall also be signed by the party or party representative submitting the document.

(b) The original and three copies of all pleadings and documents in a proceeding conducted under this part shall be filed with the Recorder, Judicial Officer Department, United States Postal Service, 2101 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 600, Arlington, Virginia 22201-3078. Normal Recorder business hours are between 8:15 a.m. and 4:45 p.m., eastern standard or daylight saving time. The Recorder will transmit a copy of each document filed to the other party, and the original to the Presiding Officer.

(c) Pleadings or other document transmittals to, or communications with, the Postal Service, other than to the Recorder under paragraph (a) of this section, shall be made through the